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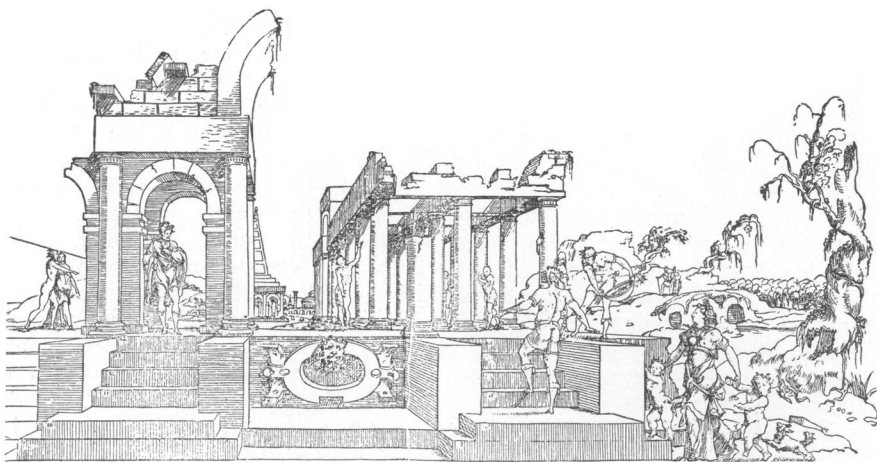
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WOODCUT FROM THE BOOK OF PERSPECTIVE BY JEAN COUSIN, PARIS, 1560

## RECENT ACCESSIONS

JEAN COUSIN'S BOOK OF PERSPECTIVE. Probably, from an artistic point of view, the most noteworthy of the several books just recently acquired for the Print Room is the "*Livre de Perspective de Jehan Cousin, Senonois, maistre Peintre à Paris*" printed by Jehan le Royer, June 28, 1560, at Paris. It is the very fine copy which once belonged to Sellière and is bound in blue morocco with his arms on the sides.

The period in which this book was produced is curiously little known, there being no treatise or critical catalogue covering the woodcut books in which it abounded. Not being incunabula and their illustrations for the most part being anonymous, these books have presented an unusually difficult field to the cataloguer and commentator, for mere bibliographical description of them does not suffice, and, names lacking, their arrangement and grouping require a trained eyesight and artistic knowledge which have not as yet been brought to bear upon them. One consequence of this is that the collector has to depend upon his unaided judgment in picking his material—and from the point of view of one adventurously minded this is possibly not entirely a defect.

There can be little doubt, however, that this *Book of Perspective* by Jean Cousin is one of the most beautiful books of its time, and there are those, of whom I am one, who believe it to be one of the most perfectly designed books which have ever been produced. Large in format, it is so beautifully spaced, its margins so delightfully considered, its ornamentation so fine, its type forms so unaffected and legible, that, notwithstanding its pressmanship and ink, which frankly are not of the very best imaginable, it is one of the volumes which should be familiar to every one who is interested in the "lay out" of the modern book. At least one well-known contemporary printer, a printer whom it is not unreasonable to think future generations will point to as the greatest of our time, has shown strongly the influence of the French books of this time in the work which has most redounded to his fame among connoisseurs of printing. As at no other time did the printers of Paris in the middle of the sixteenth century achieve a clean-cut clarity, a perfection of balance in the so simple yet so extremely difficult art of the arrangement of type slug, and of this most delicate and refined art is this book doubtless one of the finest examples that can be seen.

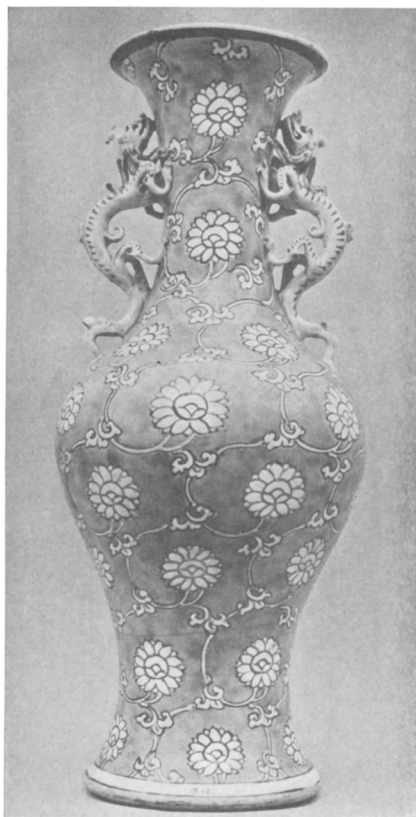
It is oftentimes difficult to persuade people that anonymous books or books laid out and arranged by little-known printers can be great masterpieces, but here, happily, little as the printer is known, there is one of the greatest figures of the French Renaissance in the immediate background to explain and justify what this book is said to be. In the printer's address to the reader he says, "selon la vacation en laquelle il a pleu a Dieu m'appeller," "being presented by Master Jean Cousin (in the art of drawing and painting not less than Zeuxis or Appelles) with a book on the practise of perspective, composed by him, and the figures necessary for the understanding thereof drawn with his hand on blocks of wood; I accepted said offer and have cut the greater part of the said figures, and finished some which previously had been commenced by master Aubin Olivier, my brother in law, and brought them to perfection, according to the intention of the said author." Books with as clear and explicit a statement as this even in modern times are few and far between, but in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries they are so rare, especially in France, that the word unique may almost be used of them.

As for the decoration and illustration of the book, slight as they are, the reproduction on page 262 must speak for itself; supreme in their elegance and the deliberation of their style, they are among the very finest things that the France of the middle sixteenth century has to offer.

W. M. I., JR.

**MING DRAGON-HANDLED VASE.** Among the Chinese ceramic wares technically known as porcelains enameled on the biscuit, that is, unglazed porcelains or biscuits decorated with enamel colors in the muffle kiln on second firing, the so-called black, yellow, or green hawthorn vases take the most prominent place. Their great decorative qualities and the beauty of their finished technique give them foremost rank among the best K'ang Hsi wares. They were made chiefly in the early part of this famous reign but they never show on the base the K'ang Hsi

mark; if any Emperor's reign mark appears, it is that of Ch'eng Hua, the early Ming emperor who reigned from 1465 to 1487. This proves by no means that the piece dates from this early reign, but it is significant in so far that it shows that to the Chinese mind it represented a type of



DRAGON-HANDLED VASE  
CHINESE, MING DYNASTY

vase common to the early Ming period. At present our collections are not well enough provided with early specimens of Ming porcelains to allow of the comparison and study which would permit the differentiation between these and later K'ang Hsi reproductions. When we consider how difficult it often is to recognize the real old ware from the present-day imitation, how much more difficult must it be to see the difference between a reproduction

made during the brilliant K'ang Hsi period, and the early Ming prototype belonging to a period of which as yet we know so little. When gradually fine Ming pieces of beautiful technique appear answering fully to the enthusiastic descriptions of early writers, we are justified in presuming that some day certain hawthorn vases may be recognized as belonging to the early period which their marks proclaim. At present we know at least that certain pieces with Ming marks undoubtedly belong to that period. Gradually the veil is lifting and we begin to be able to differentiate between the reigns of the early and later Ming times; little by little the pieces in

our collections take their places in the gradual development and the change in tastes; an important duty is now to bring together sufficient pieces to enable comparison.

The piece here reproduced and lately acquired is one of these fortunate additions. It is of the same general family as the hawthorn vases, that is, it is enameled on biscuit. The shape, the spirited form of the dragon handles, the decoration, and the quality of the glazes denote a Ming origin. Though it seems to belong to the earlier part rather than the end of the dynasty, it would be rash as yet to put a date on it.

S. C. B. R.

## NOTES

### EARLY AMERICAN COINS.

Judge A. T. Clearwater has added to his collection of Colonial silver, and lent to the Museum, specimens of the first coins struck in the American Colonies. They are what are known as the New England shilling and the pine-tree shilling and pine-tree sixpence, and were minted by John Hull, the celebrated mintmaster of Boston. The New England shilling was struck under the order of the Court of the twenty-seventh of May, 1652, and the pine-tree shilling and sixpence under the order of the twenty-sixth of October, 1652. Herewith are shown both the obverse and reverse of all these pieces which are exhibited with Judge Clearwater's collection of Colonial silver in Gallery 22.

The following is an extract from the court records appointing John Hull Master of the Mint, and authorizing the coining of the first coins struck in what is now the United States, the quaint spelling of the seventeenth century being used in hac verba.

MASSACHUSETTS  
COURT RECORDS, 1652-1682

"1652, May 27. It is ordered by this Court & the authoritie thereof, that the printed order about money shalbe in force untill the first of the seventh mo<sup>th</sup> next, & no longer; and that from and after the

first of September next, the money hereafter appoynted & expressed shalbe the current money of this common wealth, & no other, unles English, except the receivers consent thereunto. In psuance of the intent of this Court herein, be it further ordred and enacted by the authoritie of this Court, that all psons whatsoever have libertie to bring in into the mint howse, at Boston, all bullion, plate, or Spanish coyne, there to be melted and brought to the alloy of sterling silver by John Hull, master of the sd mint, & his sworne officers, & by him to be coyned into twelve pence, six pence & three pence peeces, which shall be for forme flatt, & square on the sides, & stamped on the one side with NE, & on the other side with XII<sup>d</sup>, VI<sup>d</sup>, & III<sup>d</sup>, according to the value of each peece, together with a privie marke, which shalbe appoynted every three monthes by the Governor, & knowne only to him & the sworne officers of the mint; & further, the sd master of the mint aforesd is hereby required to coyne all the sd money of good silver of the jusy alloy of new sterling English money, & for value to stampe two pence in a shilling of lesser vlew than the psent English coyne, and the lesser peeces pportionable; and all such coyne as aforesd shall be acknowledged to be the current coyne of this common wealth, &